

Robyn Link

Walpole, MA 02081

11/14/2020

Walpole Zoning Board of Appeals
135 School St # 110
Walpole, MA 02081

Dear members of the Walpole Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA),

I am writing to the ZBA regarding the Cedar Edge and Cedar Crossing 40B Project proposed for the town of Walpole. As a town resident and a professional in the energy and utility industry for over 17 years, I was extremely disappointed to learn during the 11/2/2020 town meeting how little was being done by Omni to support energy efficiency, sustainable development and construction on behalf of this potential Walpole affordable housing community.

On Omni's Cedar Edge and Cedar Crossing Project website, the Omni Corporation lists sustainability as a benefit and directly states "40B encourages a more compact footprint to reduce pavement and preserve resources. The Cedar developments also intend to implement energy efficient systems to contribute to a green, low carbon footprint."

During the 11/2 meeting, Brent Mangel from Omni spoke about the project's building footprint and the only mention of energy efficiency and sustainability was that "energy star appliances" would be installed in the unit and that Omni would adhere to energy building codes set forward by Massachusetts. I am respectfully requesting that the ZBA vets the opportunities for energy efficiency and sustainable housing more granularly with Omni. Walpole has recently adopted the 780 CMR 115 Appendix AA the Stretch Energy Code (in support of higher efficiency standards) and is in the process of applying for green communities' designation. It would be in the town's best interest to request/require Omni to adopt the Passive House Compliance Option as part of meeting Walpole's stretch code and in support of the 2008 Green Communities Act. I would encourage the ZBA and Omni to reach out to Walpole's Building Commissioner - Michael Yanovitch for further discussion.

Should Omni have concerns about additional costs/or deem this approach uneconomical there are many excellent statewide energy efficiency programs that support incentives for multi-family high rise new construction. Since Omni has proposed two six story buildings, they would be eligible for the Mass Saves Multifamily High Rise New Construction Program offer-- (starts at four stories + and supports Passive House option) <https://www.masssave.com/en/saving/residential-rebates/multi-family-high-rise-new-construction>. Omni has an opportunity to do the right thing in support of 40B by making this housing project into affordable and comfortable homes not just units while reducing this housing project's carbon footprint and supporting Walpole's desire to become a green community. By moving forward with the passive housing option Omni would meet the stretch code and at a minimum accomplish the following:

- Provide the highest level of energy efficiency and opportunities to include renewables where possible (i.e. solar water heating systems) which would lower residents' utility bills in support of 40B's affordable housing goals

- Reduce overall energy load as a result of homes being more energy efficient and in turn less impact to the grid and environment supporting sustainability and green state and community goals
- Enable better indoor air quality and reduce noise (very appropriate given the close proximity of the trains) by creating a super-efficient shell specific to passive house option

If Omni cannot support this request, the number of units should be reduced in order to develop quality residences that contribute to a sustainable future, decrease the carbon footprint in our community and promote end to end what 40B embodies – affordable housing and this should include implementing all energy efficiency measures available for new construction homes to ensure maximum comfort and lowest utility bills for these new residents seeking affordable housing. Should Omni still need financial assistance to accommodate this request, Omni can leverage Mass Saves energy efficiency incentive program for buildings 3 stories and under: <https://www.masssave.com/en/saving/residential-rebates/new-construction>.

Lastly, like many residents that have reached out to the ZBA about building this community on the former Bird Machine site, I am deeply concerned about what chemicals still remain and whether our water source will be at risk if construction happens on this site. I trust that the ZBA will do right by the current and future Walpole residents and ensure all proper testing is completed before approving this project as well as providing ongoing monitoring (i.e. monitoring wells) to ensure contamination does not become an issue.

Respectfully Yours,

Robyn Link